THE FRENCH CINEMA BOOK

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY MICHAEL TEMPLE & MICHAEL WITT

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Second edition

Edited by Michael Temple and Michael Witt

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Frontispiece: Brigitte Bardot and Jeanne Moreau in *Viva Maria!* (Louis Malle, 1965)

For *Numéro deux*

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Introduction

Michael Temple and Michael Witt

This second edition of *The French Cinema Book* is not just a revised or updated version of the first edition published over a decade ago. It is essentially a new book. When we were asked to consider producing a second edition, we decided as editors to take the opportunity to dismantle the existing volume and build a fresh project based on the same principles, but better. Thus while remaining faithful to the spirit and methodology of the original, we have significantly *expanded the coverage* of the book, *restructured its contents* chronologically, and brought in *extra contributors* with additional expertise.

In purely quantitative terms, the resulting volume is much bigger, and its coverage broader, featuring thirty-seven chapters compared to the twenty-one chapters of the first edition. There are now no fewer than seventeen chapters, compared to six in the previous version, devoted entirely to the diversity of films that make up French cinema (the seven 'Forms' chapters), and to what those films show (the ten 'Representations' chapters). More than two-thirds of the chapters are entirely original contributions and several of the chapters retained from the first edition have been thoroughly rewritten with fresh content.

In terms of chronological structure, we have changed the periodisation of French cinema history from three blocks to four, thus enabling more detailed attention to each period. Whereas in the first edition we opted for fairly conventional narrative 'cuts' at 1930 (the coming of sound) and 1960 (the New Wave), here we wanted to introduce a more challenging periodisation that did not take these breaks for granted and would also spread the historical coverage across four blocks of approximately thirty years each. These periods are now 1890–1920, 1920–50, 1950–80 and 1980–present. In this revised disposition, the first historical period takes us from the beginnings of cinema in the nineteenth century to the end of France's early industrial dominance with the catastrophe of World War I; the second period covers the heyday of silent film art, the transition to sound and the consequences of Occupation and Liberation for French national cinema; the third transports us through the forced modernisation of French film in the face of decolonisation, the coming of television and mass media and the political revolts of the late 1960s; and the final period brings us up to date with the contemporary challenges to French cinema represented by the digital revolution and the globalisation of mass media, in a political context characterised by France's continuing economic and social decline and its loss of influence on the world stage.

Finally, in response to the expanded coverage and restructured chronology of the second edition, we have sought out additional authors, most notably from France, who have brought their knowledge and expertise to the collection, as well as an innovative approach or angle to their topic. Thus alongside original contributions from well-known names such as Laurent Mannoni on early technology, Geneviève Sellier and Noël Burch on gender representations, Nicole Brenez on the avant-garde and Jean-Michel Frodon on contemporary film personnel, the book also features essays by further France-based scholars whose work will be less familiar to an English-speaking audience: Laurent Le Forestier (early film industry), Teresa Castro (film cartography), Hélène Fleckinger (feminist video), Sébastien Denis (Algerian war), Franck Le Gac (spectatorship theories), Laurent Creton and Anne Jäckel (the film industry since 1950), Kira Kitsopanidou (digital distribution) and Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto (contemporary cinephilia). In addition, we have commissioned work from leading scholars of French cinema based in the UK, the USA and elsewhere: Monica Dall'Asta (early film theory), Jennifer Wild (experimental forms), Alison Levine (institutional documentary), Sam Di Iorio (filming the everyday), Daniel Morgan (rethinking André Bazin), Martin O'Shaughnessy (recent political cinema), Will Higbee

Josette Andriot played Protéa in a series of action films in the 1910s

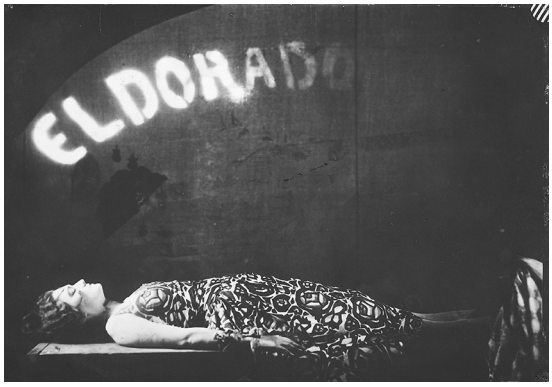
(Maghrebi screen presence), James Williams (LGBT representation) and Hunter Vaughan (film-philosophy). This second edition of *The French Cinema Book* brings together the new work by these authors with revised chapters by the international line-up of scholars of French cinema who also contributed to the first edition: Richard Abel (the people who created French cinema), Ian Christie (film language before World War I), Elizabeth Ezra (the invention of film spectatorship), Alastair Phillips (émigré film-makers), Colin Crisp (the film industry in crisis), Charles O'Brien (adapting foreign technologies), Ginette Vincendeau (popular film genres), Keith Reader (representation of the provinces) and Alison Smith (alternative film creators).

Despite the many changes and additions to the original *French Cinema Book*, there is one vital aspect of the project which we have retained without hesitation. That is the basic theoretical model of what we understand French cinema to be. This model is best expressed in the form of three fundamental beliefs and seven structuring questions.

The three beliefs are as follows:

First, *that French cinema should be appreciated in its full historical range*, from the 1880s through to the present day, and therefore that *The French Cinema Book* should explicitly seek to redress the bias of academic film studies towards certain favoured moments in French cinema history such as the first decade of the talkies, the New Wave and above all the contemporary period. In the years since the first edition of this book, the trend towards an over-reliance on the contemporary and a lack of curiosity for cinema before the 1990s has significantly grown in terms of research as well as teaching. Whatever the reasons for this, the accumulative effect of such a methodological distortion is an impoverishment of knowledge and represents a disservice both to students and the wider research community.

Second, *that French cinema is a diverse ecology of forms and practices*, ranging from the avant-garde to the mainstream, from the popular to the high-brow, from the classic to the forgotten and the obscure; and that we should approach this vast and surprisingly unexplored



Ève Francis in *El Dorado* (Marcel L'Herbier, 1921)

corpus of film objects with the most open and inclusive attitude possible, notably embracing the heterogeneity of documentary and experimental cinema, alongside the more traditionally studied feature-length fiction films, whether these latter be the work of recognised auteurs or less established names in the canon. We are well aware that even the revised *French Cinema Book* fails to do justice to such neglected areas of French cinema as animation, newsreels, industrial films, amateur film and home movies.

Third, *that knowledge of French cinema should not be restricted to materials readily available in subtitled versions*, whether in the context of teaching or research. To some extent, this belief is specific to the study of French cinema outside a francophone environment; but in fact it goes beyond that, as it reflects a more general philosophical attitude towards the development and divulgation of knowledge. Should teachers only teach what is easily accessible to students? Should researchers and critics only write about what is already in the public or commercial domain? Or should they be pushing the boundaries of knowledge and thereby influencing what is available and on what terms? However much the possible responses to these questions may have evolved

Shooting the final sequence of *Les 400 Coups* (François Truffaut, 1959)

in the years since the first edition of *The French Cinema Book*, thanks to the importance of the internet and digital culture more generally in the legal and illegal distribution of moving images, we as editors stand essentially by our original statement in the Introduction to the first edition of this book that *one can easily fall into the trap of thinking that 'French cinema' is truly represented by the small proportion of films selected for commercial exhibition abroad, distributed on DVD, or made available on the internet, and which then get taught in classrooms, written about by critics, and eventually come to constitute its 'history'*. In other words, technology may evolve, even radically, but attitudes are resistant to change and require constant questioning and challenging.

With these three key beliefs in mind, let us turn to the seven methodological approaches that structure each periodical section of *The French Cinema Book*, and which reflect the theoretical ambition of the project as a whole. We call these seven approaches successively 'People', 'Business', 'Technology', 'Forms', 'Representations', 'Spectators' and 'Debates'. Each heading represents a different angle to the study of film, and while none is intrinsically the right or the better way, when taken together these approaches constitute a multifaceted method for thinking about French cinema and its history, one that poses important questions and interesting challenges for students and teachers, as well as suggesting prospective lines of enquiry for researchers. So we shall now say a few words about each of these seven topics, and outline some of the ways in which the various contributors have addressed them.

PEOPLE: *Who are the men and women who make French cinema happen?* The four chapters devoted to *People* respond to this question by exploring the role of human agency and the power of working communities in the film-making process. The long tradition, and enduring prevalence, of 'auteurism' as a critical perspective for thinking about cinema has tended to reduce the notion of French 'film people' to directors, a tendency complemented rather than challenged by the growth in star studies in recent years. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with studying major film directors, nor even with approaching films as 'texts' conceived by film-making 'authors', there are clear limitations to such a method, which comes to Film Studies from the academic study of literature. Likewise, the study of stars has opened up exciting ways of thinking about film reception, popular culture and the history of production, although at its least ambitious it can become merely textual interpretation, along the lines of auteurism, but under another banner. Thus while numerous directors and stars are represented and discussed in *The French Cinema Book*, our ambition was to invite the writers of the *People* chapters

Jacques Dutronc in *Van Gogh* (Maurice Pialat, 1991)

to open up the category of 'film-maker' onto the diversity of human energies and relations that together 'make films': producers, writers, designers, actors, technicians, to name but a few. Richard Abel (Chapter 1) probably provides the widest definition of who might be considered 'film people', insofar as his discussion includes examples of scientists, inventors and entrepreneurs, as well as producers, writers, directors and actors, all of whom contributed in diverse ways to the invention of cinema as a popular entertainment and its establishment as a major world industry and new art form. Alastair Phillips (Chapter 8) questions the definition of classic 'French' cinema by focusing on the contribution made by émigré personnel to film production between 1920 and 1950, and he discusses in detail the cases of the cinematographer Curt Courant, the set designer André Andrejew, the director Julien Duvivier and the producer Pierre Braunberger. In Chapter 18, Alison Smith argues against the familiar auteurist perspective on post-New Wave cinema, and examines three important but under-researched functions of film-making, drawing on a case study each time: cinematography (case study, Raoul Coutard), screenwriting (Jean-Claude Carrière), and acting (Michel Piccoli). Finally, Jean-Michel Frodon provides a wide-ranging account of contemporary film life that analyses the contributions of political figures (e.g. Jack Lang), producers (e.g. Daniel Toscan du Plantier) and actors (e.g. Gérard Depardieu), as well as the creative contributions of successive generations of directors from Agnès Varda to Abdellatif Kechiche, via Maurice Pialat and Claire Denis.

BUSINESS: *In what kind of industrial culture has French cinema evolved?* In responding to this question, the four *Business* chapters explore the socio-economic infrastructure of French cinema, including issues of investment, plant, distribution and markets, the role of governmental intervention in production and consumption, and the framework of venture capitalism in which 'the film business' takes place. In Chapter 2, Laurent Le Forestier explains how French companies such as Pathé-Frères, closely followed by Gaumont and others, effectively invented the film industry as we know it, long before the establishment of Hollywood and the studio system, and how their specialisation in equipment manufacture and consolidation of the distribution and exhibition sectors ultimately guaranteed their long-term survival. Colin Crisp (Chapter 9) picks up the story after the devastation of World War I, and focuses on two further historical shocks to which the French film industry had to adapt in order to survive: the conversion to sound, which actually led to a boom in domestic consumption, and the German Occupation, during which the film industry was purged by the French State and restructured along the nationalist-corporatist lines that formed the basis of the post-war French industrial model. In Chapters 19 and 29, Laurent Creton and Anne Jäckel recount the evolution of this French model in more recent times, notably tracking the changing relationship between the film industry and related media forces, as well as the fine balance between state aid and cultural entrepreneurship, especially in the context of the European Union and economic globalisation.

TECHNOLOGY: *To what extent have technological factors determined the course of French cinema?* Whether we think of cinema as primarily an art form or an industry, or as a combination of both, it is clear that its history cannot be entirely detached from the parallel history of modern technology, although few scholars would now argue that technological determinism provides a satisfactory model for explaining all of cinema's evolutionary shifts. The four *Technology* chapters address this dynamic relationship between cinema and technology in contrasting ways, each according to the specific historical moment in question. In terms of its origins in the nineteenth century, cinema might be considered a primarily scientific invention that accidentally became a mass-entertainment medium when it was 'crossed' with popular theatre and magic shows. Certainly Laurent Mannoni's essay (Chapter 3) shows the strength of the link between late nineteenth-century scientific culture and the so-called invention of cinema in the 1880s and 1890s, for example the important roles played by scientists such as the astronomer Pierre-Jules-César Janssen or the physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey, even before the more practically minded engineers and businessmen such as the Lumière brothers became involved, closely followed by Charles Pathé and then Léon Gaumont. If France's early pre-eminence in the manufacture of film equipment and materials was eventually overtaken by US and German technology, as was the case by the 1920s and certainly by the coming of sound, this simply meant that French cinema's relationship to technology became accordingly a question of

adapting to external factors and domesticating foreign technology, as Charles O'Brien demonstrates in Chapter 10, rather than initiating change and exploiting one's superiority. This sense of cinema taking the creative lead from evolving technologies rather than merely reacting to determining scientific forces is developed further in Michael Witt's essay (Chapter 20), which explores how the French film industry found its own ways of dealing with advances in colour, 3-D and widescreen technologies, both artistically and economically speaking, and at a pace that suited its specific historical circumstances. Likewise, the New Wave followed the example of cinéma vérité's adaptation of certain improvements in filmstock, camera design and sound equipment, in order to create a new kind of cinema that reflected a freedom from technical constraints as well as aesthetic rules. Finally, in the contemporary period, Kira Kitsopanidou (Chapter 30) approaches the relationship between cinema and technology from an entirely different angle when she analyses the ways in which the French distribution sector has responded to the profound changes brought to cinema by the digital revolution, the full consequences of which are still too recent to predict.

FORMS: *How can we study the diversity of film forms practised across French cinema, and how have the formal 'languages' of film changed over time?* The addition of four extra chapters addressing these questions in the revised edition of *The French Cinema Book* has enabled us to cover more types of film-making and to provide a balance between contrasting tendencies in French film history. Thus in Chapter 4, Ian Christie engages with a wide variety of forms and genres of the early period – single-shot films, trick films, comic films, documentaries, historical films, serials, the avant-garde, dramatic narratives – in order to question the linear account of early film history as a 'steady technical-cum-expressive development'. In Chapters 11 and 12, Jennifer Wild and Ginette Vincendeau respectively explore two distinct paths within the same time period: the former examines the creative encounter between cinema and the artistic avant-garde, focusing not just on formal experimentation but also on the cultural context and political dimension of this dynamic relationship, both in the avant-garde heyday of the 1920s and beyond the transition to sound; the latter examines the aesthetics of 'the art of spectacle' in mainstream feature films of the sound period, drawing attention to neglected popular genres such as musicals and 'filmed theatre', alongside more familiar examples taken from Poetic Realism and the classic French genres of literary adaptation and costume dramas. In Chapters 22 and 32, Nicole Brenez redraws the map of modern French cinema by placing the marginalised political and experimental film-making traditions at the heart of her discussion, alongside a range of higher-profile auteur films from the post-New Wave era; she then extends this analysis into the contemporary period, arguing that experimental cinema has now become the great mixing-desk of so much that is artistically innovative and politically challenging in the world of the visual arts. Complementary to these two chapters devoted to the avant-garde, Michael Temple and Michael Witt (Chapter 21) present a survey of the main formal trends in the cultural mainstream from the early 1950s to the late 1970s, taking in the 'tradition of quality', the documentary movement, the New Wave and popular genres such as comedy and the thriller; while in Chapter 31 Michael Witt analyses the extraordinary renaissance of documentary film-making that has taken place in France since the 1980s, partly in response to the curatorial investment of French television and partly as an indirect consequence of the alternative film-making movement that grew out of post-1968 political and cultural activism.

REPRESENTATIONS: *What have French films shown us of France, its society, its concerns and the changing lives of its citizens?* The significantly increased discussion of this topic in the revised edition reflects the importance of content analysis when studying a national cinema, and exemplifies the rich resource that films of all types can offer the cultural historian. The expansion of this topic has also allowed the authors to follow quite distinct paths of enquiry in relation to their given time period while indirectly contributing to a collective image of France's self-representation on the screen. Certain common traits thus emerge across the span of the book: Teresa Castro (Chapter 5), Keith Reader (Chapter 13), and Alison Levine (Chapter 15) explore in different ways the political and cultural geography of France and its citizens; Noël Burch and Geneviève Sellier (Chapter 14), Hélène Fleckinger (Chapter 23) and James Williams (Chapter 35) each engage with aspects of gender representation and sexual politics; Sébastien Denis (Chapter 25) and Will Higbee (Chapter 34) examine respectively French cinema's representation of the end of colonialism and the complexity of the contemporary postcolonial context; and finally, Sam Di Iorio (Chapter 24) and Martin O'Shaughnessy (Chapter 33) discuss the politics of everyday life and the representation of political struggle.

SPECTATORS: *How has the film-going experience evolved in France? Who saw which films, where, and in what conditions?* The questions addressed in the four *Spectators* chapters (the reception of films, patterns of film-going, the changing socio-cultural profile of audiences) are among the least researched topics in French Film Studies and there remains much primary research to be carried out in this field. In Chapter 6, Elizabeth Ezra speculates that the growth in film-going as a regular part of the

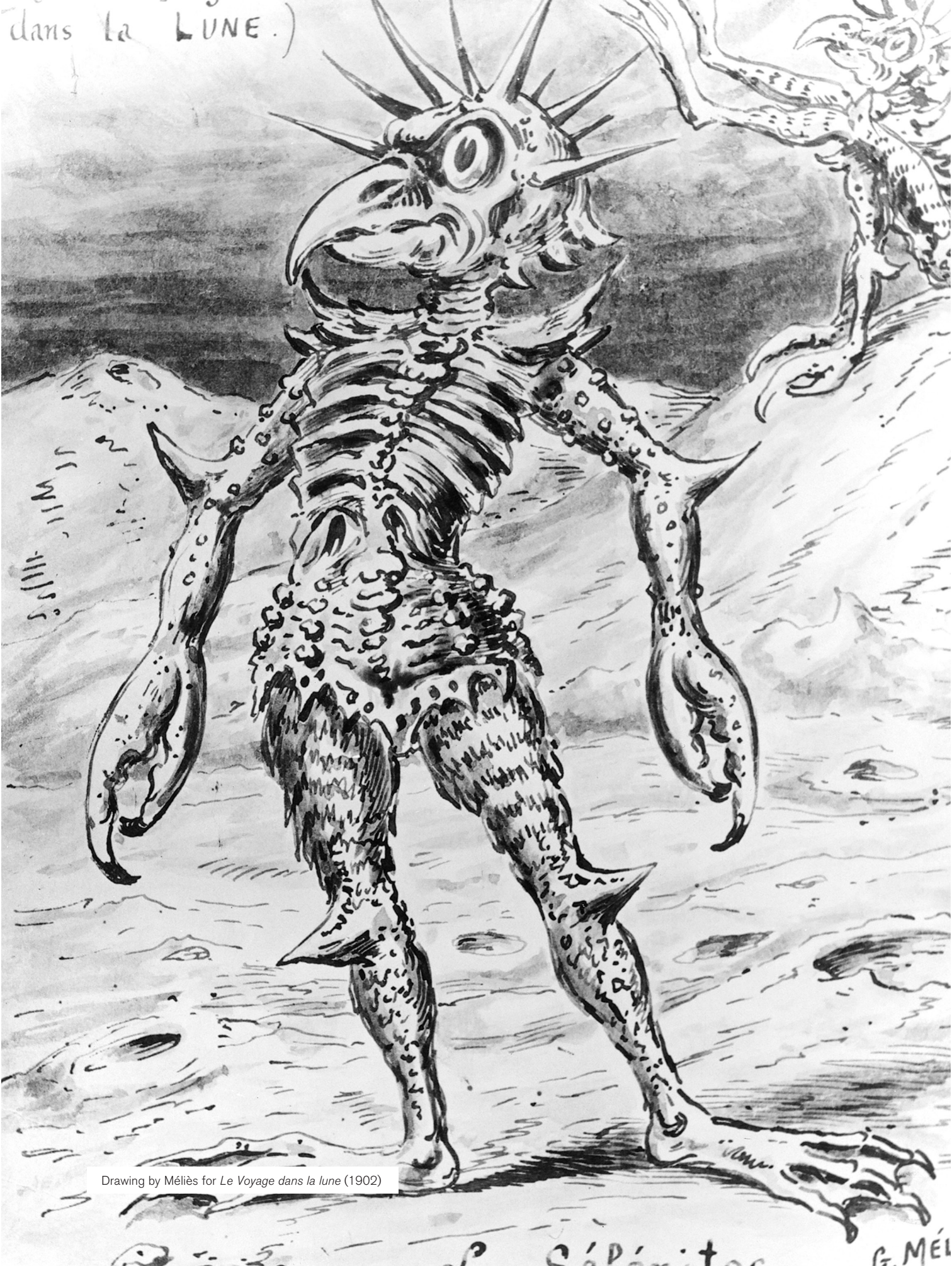
urban experience in turn-of-the-century France established cinema as a vital cultural force and set in motion a 'cinemising' process whereby a codified set of spectatorial conventions was introduced and gradually reinforced. In Chapter 16, Michael Temple and Muriel Tinel-Temple explore the available data regarding film-going habits during the golden age of film palaces, the establishment of cinema as the number one popular entertainment form, the post-sound boom of film audiences and the historically exceptional circumstances of the Occupation. As film-going reaches a peak in the late 1950s, before experiencing a seemingly irreversible decline in the face of competition from television and other socio-cultural shifts in the 1960s, Franck Le Gac (Chapter 26) analyses the emergence of film theories that explicitly address the question of spectatorship and challenge the supposed passivity of the cinema audience. In Chapter 36, Laurent Jullier and Jean-Marc Leveratto propose an original theory of contemporary film spectatorship and cinephile practices that foregrounds the underappreciated expertise and competencies of the popular film-goer in the context of digital culture and online discussion forums and file-sharing platforms.

DEBATES: *How has cinema been represented and debated in French culture?* There is no other country where cinema has been taken so seriously and discussed with such passion as it has in France. The *Debates* chapters look at the rich tradition of French film-thinking, and explore how the experience of cinema has been analysed and contested by a variety of critical voices. In Chapters 7 and 17, Monica Dall'Asta explores the origins of film theory in France before World War I, and its subsequent flourishing in the 1920s as the 'First Wave' of critics-turned-film-makers (including Jean Epstein and Louis Delluc) developed such key theoretical concepts as *photogénie* and 'pure cinema', and dialogued with currents of the artistic avant-garde such as Surrealism. In Chapter 27, Daniel Morgan revisits the film criticism of André Bazin, notably evaluating the significant amount of fresh research on his work conducted in recent years and interrogating the persistence of Bazin's influence across the generations. Finally, Hunter Vaughan approaches the question of film-philosophy in the French context, examining how the great tradition of philosophical engagement with cinema has evolved from Henri Bergson or Maurice Merleau-Ponty into the contemporary speculations of Alain Badiou, Jean Louis Schefer, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Rancière and Jean-Luc Nancy.

It will be clear from this introduction that *The French Cinema Book* does not claim to be an encyclopaedia of French cinema, nor does it promise a complete chronological survey of French film history. As editors, we are acutely conscious of just how much work remains to be done in all periods and all areas of French cinema studies. What our collection proposes is a model that combines the virtues of consensus with the pleasures of innovation, offering a clear narrative account of the major historical developments in French cinema, as well as new areas of enquiry, neglected topics, unknown people, fresh ideas and thousands of films – familiar, obscure, forgotten – which we invite our readers to explore or rediscover in a spirit of curiosity and critical engagement. *Vive le cinéma!*

PART ONE

1890–1920



Drawing by Méliès for *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902)

1 People 1890–1920

The Men and Women Who Made French Cinema

Richard Abel

This chapter presents a history of French cinema through the people who worked in or for the new industry during the early silent period. Besides exploring the contribution of key individuals, it seeks to suggest ways of rethinking the relationship among them as well as between them and the topics addressed in subsequent chapters in the 1890–1920 period. The discussion follows the transformation of moving pictures into 'cinema'. Organised chronologically and divided into eight sections, it focuses on those who made significant changes in the cinema as a cultural institution and/or in film-making as a practice, or did most to consolidate and stabilise it as an institution or practice at particular historical moments.

Prelude: Prior to 1894

Of the numerous strands of scientific, technological and cultural practice that intersected in the late nineteenth century to produce moving pictures, there were two in which the French especially excelled: the analysis of movement and the optical synthesis of movement. For the first, Étienne-Jules Marey was undoubtedly the crucial figure. A professor of physiology at the Collège de France in Paris, Marey originated a graphic method of recording the movements of humans, animals and objects. Initially, his research led him to develop electrical and mechanical devices to record physiological movement in and of the human body: e.g. blood circulation, heat changes, respiration, locomotion. After seeing Eadweard Muybridge's serial photographs of moving figures, published in France (1878), and meeting the photographer in Paris in 1881, Marey turned to single-plate chronophotography as a much more precise method. His first device, a 'photographic gun', was modelled on an apparatus that astronomer Pierre-Jules-César Janssen had used to record a solar eclipse in 1874. Once Marey's publicly funded centre, the Station Physiologique, opened in Paris in 1882, he constructed a number of single-plate cameras to advance his research. In 1888, Marey again improved his recording methods by designing a camera that substituted Eastman paper roll film for glass plates; the first series of photographs taken by this apparatus (a pigeon in flight, a hand opening and closing) were presented later that year to the Académie des Sciences. Within another year, he was using transparent celluloid negative film. During his career, Marey amassed thousands of glass plates and nearly 800 short chronophotographic films, many images from which were reproduced in his encyclopaedic work, *Le Mouvement* (1894).

Marey was committed to analytical research, so it was left to others to work on the optical synthesis of movement. In France, the crucial figure was Émile Reynaud. Trained in industrial and optical design, Reynaud assisted Abbé Moigno's illustrated lectures on popular science in Paris. This magic lantern work led him to tinker with improving the Zoëtrope and Phénakistoscope, popular toys of synthesised motion. Patenting his Praxinoscope in 1877, he decided to market a toy Praxinoscope Theatre, in which a band of images reflected by a spinning mirror was viewed through a proscenium arch. His next step was to develop a projecting Praxinoscope, and in 1888 he patented a Théâtre Optique, using a long band of coloured images, painted on gelatine squares linked by leather straps and metal strips, with holes to engage pins on a cranked revolving drum (analogous to a bicycle chain). In 1892, Reynaud contacted Gabriel Thomas, director of the Musée Grévin in Paris, who had already explored, unsuccessfully, an option to project Marey's motion studies as visual spectacle. Thomas contracted with Reynaud to present five half-hour shows a day (twelve on Sundays and holidays) in the museum's Cabinet Fantastique, with himself narrating the stories of his first three bands – *Pauvre Pierrot*, *Clown et ses chiens* and *Un bon bock* – accompanied by a piano player and singer. The shows quickly became popular, and over the next eight years (as he created at least one new set of images a year), Reynaud gave 12,800 performances to half a million museum visitors. By 1894, it was clear that the Parisian public seeking

entertainment would pay to view lengthy bands of sequential moving images (not yet fixed on celluloid) projected mechanically, and repeatedly, on a large luminous screen.

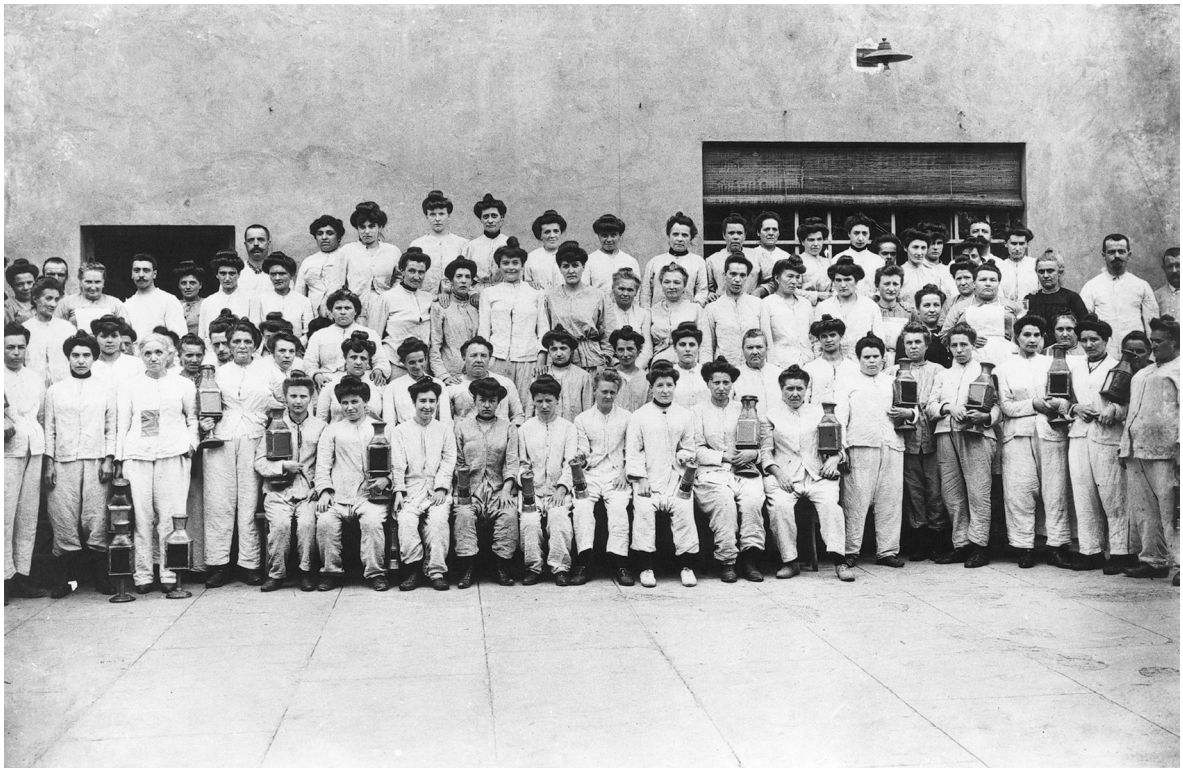
Beginnings: 1894–6

In 1894, the strands of scientific, technological and cultural practice began to come together. One of Marey's collaborators, Georges Demenÿ, founder of a 'rational gymnastics', was perhaps the first to link the recording and projecting of moving images. In 1892, at the International Exhibition of Photography in Paris, Demenÿ exhibited his 'phonoscope', an apparatus for viewing some of the chronophotograph series he had made at the Station Physiologique: e.g. himself speaking the phrase 'Je vous aime'. Against Marey's wishes, he set up a company to promote the phonoscope, especially for amateurs and families to present 'animated portraits'. He also developed a camera for taking moving images, using 60mm celluloid film and an intermittent device, a roller (mounted on a rotating gear) that advanced just enough film to achieve precise exposures. After Marey fired him in 1894, Demenÿ opened his own laboratory in Paris, patented his improved camera as the Chronophotographe and began filming the first of a hundred short subjects: e.g. street scenes, boxers, dancers, passing trains, a baby's first steps. His attempts to market both apparatuses, however, through George William de Bedts (Paris agent for European Blair, suppliers of celluloid film) and Léon Gaumont, proved unsuccessful. Underfinanced and lacking a good business sense, Demenÿ had to cede all his patents to Gaumont in 1896, after which he resumed his research on physical education and, in 1902, was appointed Professor of Applied Physiology at Joinville. Yet his designs (recently discovered) for a combined camera-projector and a large projector (with a claw intermittent movement) intended for publicly exhibiting moving pictures would soon be realised by others, including De Bedts and, most significantly, the Lumière brothers.

In the early 1890s, the Lyons family firm of Lumière was one of Europe's most important suppliers of photographic film and supplies. In late 1894, Louis Lumière discussed Demenÿ's designs on a visit to the latter's new laboratory in Paris; about the same time, he and Auguste Lumière took note of Edison's popular Kinetoscopes (which used 35mm film), perhaps in the concession that Michel and Eugène Werner had opened near the Musée Grévin. This conjunction spurred the brothers to design their own apparatus, an elegant, lightweight, sophisticated machine that not only recorded and projected but also printed moving images on 35mm film. Patented in February 1895, the Cinématographe (their father Antoine suggested the name 'Domitor') was demonstrated at professional meetings in France and Belgium throughout the year, and Jules Carpentier, a maker of scientific instruments in Paris, was engaged to manufacture twenty-five machines. Anxious to promote the Cinématographe, Antoine Lumière organised afternoon and evening showings in the Grand Café's Salon Indien, on the Paris Boulevard des Italiens, beginning 28 December 1895. That day, photographer Clément-Maurice sold tickets and Charles Moisson (an engineer who constructed the first model) ran the Cinématographe, showing films such as *Sortie d'usine*, *Arroseur et arrosé*, and *Repas de bébé*. So successful was the show that Clément-Maurice continued to give performances for several months thereafter, and Carpentier was ordered to make 200 more machines. Instead of selling their apparatus – as De Bedts did his patented Kinétographe in early 1896 – the Lumières leased franchises in France, its colonies and elsewhere to agents who would pay a daily fee for the services of an operator and machine. Consequently, the company trained dozens of operators – among them Félix Mesguich, Alexandre Promio and Gabriel Veyre – to conduct pioneering exhibitions of the portable Cinématographe around the world, and ship the results of their film-making back to Lyons for inclusion in a growing catalogue of short films. Their apparent aim was to use the machine as a means to expand the company's primary business: the manufacture and sale of photographic film.

Entertainers and Entrepreneurs: 1896–1903

One witness to that first Grand Café show was Georges Méliès, owner-manager of the Robert-Houdin Théâtre in Paris, where he directed his own popular magic acts and *féeries*. Méliès immediately saw the Cinématographe as a new technology of amusement that could augment his own performances. Within months, he had purchased a projector from Robert Paul in England (since Lumière would not sell him one), used its design to construct his own camera, begun to shoot short subjects in imitation of Lumière, and projected them as an added attraction in his theatre. In the spring of 1897, sensing the public's interest in this new spectacle, he erected a glass house studio on family property in Montreuil in order to make 'transformation views'; the following autumn, the Robert-Houdin was regularly showing moving pictures that now bore his trademark, Star-Film. Méliès also began selling his trick films for exhibition at the music halls and cafés-concerts in Paris as well as at the annual or semi-annual fairs in the provinces, pre-empting such competitors as the inventor-entrepreneurs, Georges Mendel and A.-F. Parnaland. Soon he was able to produce moving picture adaptations of his and others' *féeries* that ran ten to fifteen minutes, some of which, like *Cendrillon* (1899), were sold in hand-coloured prints as far away as the USA and



Workers outside the Lumière factory in Lyons

featured as headline vaudeville acts. Unlike the Lumières and others, Méliès remained above all an entertainer and owner of a small family business; that did not change even after the worldwide success of *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902). The one thing he did, in order to counteract others from duping his popular films (no copyright protection existed), was hire sales agents in England, Germany and Spain and, in 1903, send his brother Gaston to open a Star-Film office in New York. The following year, Méliès produced a total of forty-five films (many of them lengthy *féeries*), in what turned out to be the apogee of his career.

Although he did not witness the Grand Café shows, Léon Gaumont did have an indirect connection to the Lumières. He had served briefly as a ledger clerk for Carpentier in 1881, before working his way up to be manager of a reputable Paris photographic supply firm – its clients included psychologist Jean Charcot, politician René Waldeck-Rousseau and writer Émile Zola. In 1895, with the backing of entrepreneurs such as Gustave Eiffel, the ambitious Gaumont seized an opportunity to buy the company (after the previous owners quarrelled) and set out to manufacture and market optical and photographic equipment on a larger scale. Acquiring Demenÿ's patents, Gaumont had his chief engineer, Léopold Decaux, design an improved 'Chronographe' that used 35mm film, and gave his young office manager, the equally ambitious Alice Guy, whose family fortune had been lost in Chile when she was sixteen, the task of producing short films for its promotion. So successful were Guy's *actualités*, comic films (often drawn from postcards), dance films and other short fictional subjects such as *La Concierge* (1899), that Gaumont began to market the films in France and then hired a sales agent for England. Gaumont's personal interest remained focused on technological developments, and not only in cameras and projectors – one of which won a top award at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle – but in colour cinematography and image–sound synchrony. In 1902, he presented his own speaking image to the French Photographic Society by synchronising a 'Chrono' projector with a phonographic cylinder. This 'Chronophone' system he then promoted through performances at the Musée Grévin and other Paris venues, using *phonoscènes* that Guy produced of celebrated Paris music-hall performers.

Although he had no connection with the Lumières at all, Charles Pathé did share their interest in Edison's Kinetoscope. The son of Alsatian butchers, and a Protestant (in a largely Catholic country) with an unusually keen desire to gain wealth, Pathé had initially made money exhibiting and selling Edison phonographs at the fairs near Paris, which led him and his brother Émile to open a supply shop in Vincennes. When the Kinetoscope

appeared in 1895, Charles bought several made by Robert Paul in London and installed them at the same fairs. Realising the need for a ready supply of films, he joined with Henri Joly, a former gymnastics instructor at Joinville (where Demenÿ had sometimes filmed) who had already designed his own version of the Kinetoscope, to construct a camera using intermittent movement and 35mm film. This partnership was brief, but Pathé retained rights to the camera and began to exploit the films it could produce at the fairs. In 1897, Claude Grivolas, the new owner of Pierre-Victor Continsouza and René Bünzli's precision tool factory at Chatou, approached him with a financial offer to transform Pathé-Frères into a joint-stock company, in alliance with his own firm. The phonograph branch of the business, run by Émile, generated most of the company's profit at first, while Charles supervised the work of Continsouza and Bünzli in perfecting marketable cameras, projectors and negative and positive filmstock. As work progressed, Charles realised the growing commercial value of exhibiting films and, in 1900, hired Ferdinand Zecca, a Paris café-concert writer of comic and dramatic monologues, to supervise the production of a wider range of films than was available from Méliès or Gaumont. Once Pathé-Frères films began to circulate throughout France and elsewhere, several met with great success, from *Histoire d'un crime* (1901) to *Ali Baba* (1902). By 1902, Charles was constructing a glass house studio and related laboratories in Vincennes and preparing to make his company's films a major fairground attraction.

If only a few people led the development of apparatuses for recording and projecting moving pictures as well as the production of films in this early period, those involved in developing exhibition venues were more numerous and more dispersed. In Paris, for instance, at the Musée Grévin, Thomas convinced Reynaud to use celluloid for his bands of images by 1896 and then switched to showing Gaumont films, including *phonoscènes*. In managing major music halls such as the Olympia, Parisiana and Folies-Bergère, Émile and Vincent Isola (originally from Algeria) became regular clients for Méliès and Pathé films, as did Georges Froissart, who showed films at cafés-concerts, such as the Eldorado. The Lumières operated two small cinemas up until 1897, with Clément-Maurice managing one that continued at the Grand Café. As the most popular source of amusement for France's largely rural population, the fairs were even more important than the urban venues because, much like weekly newspaper supplements, they disseminated news, fashions, and 'scientific wonders' throughout the provinces. Touring these fairs were a number of small family businesses with portable theatres (perhaps seating as many as 500 people) that offered entertainments, including, shortly after they became available, moving pictures. The families worked regional circuits, encamping in designated public spaces for several weeks: e.g. Pierre Unik to the west and north of Paris, Alexandre Camby to the east, Charles and Schelmo Katorza around Nantes. The Dulaar family, originally from Belgium, was one of the largest, with several brothers each managing a separate theatre in their circuit around Lyons. From his experience with the fairs around Paris, Pathé had come to know these businesses well, and he quickly turned that to an advantage, becoming their principal source of projectors and films.

Industrialisation: 1903–7

Between 1903 and 1907, the cinema in France underwent a process of industrialisation, several years earlier than in any other country, including the USA. The Lumières played no role in that process, having limited their attention to the production of filmstock after 1900. Nor did Méliès, whose influence waned, even though some of his expensive *féeries*, such as *Le Voyage à travers l'impossible* (1904) and *Le Raid Paris-Monte Carlo en deux heures* (1905), had long runs in Paris music halls. Instead, that industrialisation, increasingly dependent on fiction films, was led by Pathé, followed at a distance by Gaumont, with the assistance of new business associates and employees.

Confirming his famous line, 'I may not have invented the cinema, but I did industrialise it' (Pathé 1970: 36), Charles Pathé augmented the cinema division of Pathé-Frères in a series of bold moves designed to increase profits and dividends, sometimes drawing on contacts with 'outsider' figures like himself. At Joinville-le-Pont, next to Vincennes, he invested in a maze of factories that employed nearly 1,000 workers (many of them women) for manufacturing, perforating, developing, printing and splicing filmstock. At Vincennes, another factory (also employing women) specialised in stencil-colouring prints, a process which soon became a Pathé-Frères trademark. A new Continsouza factory built and serviced the apparatuses the company marketed, especially projectors and studio cameras – 200 apparatuses were being turned out per month by 1905. Within another year, the mass production of positive filmstock for sale had risen to an astonishing 40,000 metres per day. This production capacity was based on constructing more studios in Vincennes, Joinville-le-Pont, and Montreuil, with Zecca supervising a loosely organised 'director unit' system of film-makers hired to specialise in making one or more kinds of films. A former crowd-scene manager at several Paris theatres, Lucien Nonguet specialised in *actualités* and historical reconstructions such as *La Révolution en Russie* (1905); Gaston Velle, in trick films and *féeries* such as *La Poule aux œufs d'or* (1905); a former Lumière cameraman, Georges Hatot, in comedies and chase films such as

Dix femmes pour un mari (1905); a former publicity agent, André Heuzé, also in comedies and chase films; a former actor for André Antoine, Albert Capellani, in domestic melodramas such as *La Loi du pardon* (1906) and *La Fille du sonneur* (1906); and Zecca himself in 'realist' dramas such as *Au pays noir* (1905). By 1906, this veritable image factory was so standardised that at least half a dozen film titles were being produced in hundreds of prints for sale each week.

These phenomenal sales came partly from Pathé's efforts to monopolise the fairs, but the French market overall was relatively small compared to the potential market worldwide. His boldest move, then, was to establish sales offices for Pathé-Frères films and apparatuses across the globe between 1904 and 1907. A German Jew by the name of Siegmund Popert was apparently the crucial advance man in this process of 'globalisation': a top salesman for the phonograph division, Popert was sent first into England and Germany to market the company's films, and his success then prompted forays into Austria, Russia, Italy and Spain. Following the trajectory he mapped out, Pathé-Frères sales offices spread through the 'First World' of developed countries and client states such as Russia, sometimes creating the very markets they then saturated. These included Moscow (February 1904), New York (August 1904), Brussels (October 1904), Berlin (March 1905), Vienna (July 1905), Chicago (August 1905), St Petersburg (December 1905), Amsterdam (January 1906), Barcelona (February 1906) and Milan (May 1906). Within another year, Pathé-Frères had monopolised central Europe and was opening up the colonised areas of Asia, South America and Africa. Among the many agents responsible for creating this first 'cinema empire' were Jacques Berst in the USA (the nickelodeon boom made it Pathé's largest market) and Serge Sandberg, a Jewish émigré from Lithuania, who ran the offices in Moscow, Vienna, Berlin and Budapest. Engineer François Dussaud's prophecy – that cinema would be 'the schoolhouse, newspaper, and theatre of tomorrow' (Pathé 1970: 37) – seemed on the verge of fulfilment, and Pathé's success was trumpeted in the first trade journal that promoted the new industry, *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* (1905–8), whose editor, Edmond Benoît-Lévy, was a Paris lawyer and educator (whose parents also came from Alsace) closely associated with the company.

More cautious than his rival, Gaumont typically imitated Pathé's moves, once they proved successful. After 1903, he too encouraged Guy to produce more and more fiction films, ranging from historical dramas such as *L'Assassinat du courrier de Lyon* (1904) to comic sketches such as *Le Bébé embarrassant* (1905) or serial gag films such as *Le Matelas alcoolique* (1906), and which British Gaumont (now an independent firm) agreed to market not only in England but in the USA. By 1905, Gaumont had achieved a secure enough position in the industry to construct, next to the Buttes-Chaumont park in Paris, a 'glass cathedral' studio (then the largest in Europe), with mercury vapour lamps (the first in France) to supplement the sunlight in winter, and an adjacent factory capable of printing up to 10,000 metres of positive filmstock per day. He also began to hire more personnel, from Étienne Arnaud and Louis Feuillade, whom Guy trained as scriptwriters and directors, to set designer Henri Ménessier and his assistant, Ben Carré. Guy herself took on the task of producing even longer films such as *La Vie du Christ* (660 metres, 1906). The Gaumont company prospered to the point that, in December 1906, it could be reorganised as a joint-stock company, allied with a major bank linked to the French electrical industry. By then, as Gaumont films and apparatuses had followed Pathé's (in smaller numbers) into the French fairgrounds, music halls and cafés-concerts, the cinema division was far outstripping the original photography branch of the business.

Monopoly Plans and Competition: 1907–11

Pathé and Gaumont remained the dominant figures in the French cinema industry, yet they faced competition after 1906–7, spurred not only by their success but by Pathé's determination to risk even further expansion. In short, he sought to exploit his manufacturing and marketing capacity to create something like a monopoly that could control every stage from producing to exhibiting films, at least within France. His initial move, in partnership with Benoît-Lévy, Dussaud and lawyers Maurice Guégan and Émile Maugras, was to set up an affiliated company with the long-range project of building a circuit of permanent cinemas that would shift exhibition away from the fairs, where exhibitors had no need to constantly renew their supply of films. The first of these, the Omnia-Pathé, opened right across the street from the Musée Grévin in late December 1906, and was soon followed by others not only in Paris (there were fifty by the end of 1907) but as far away as Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux and Toulouse. His second move was to begin renting out rather than selling films and to grant concessions to half a dozen satellite companies, covering France, Belgium, Holland and North Africa, which would distribute Pathé-Frères films exclusively to these cinemas; whereas Pathé himself controlled the company distributing films in and around Paris, Benoît-Lévy and Sandberg were among those running the others. Certain parts of this plan – the circuit of cinemas, the renting of films – were quite successful, but the satellite companies soon proved unworkable and unwieldy, so that Pathé-Frères eventually had to pull back and manage its own film distribution as well as rent films to cinemas

other than its own. The monopoly plans may have failed (perhaps inevitably), but they did convince Pathé that his empire's success depended on controlling film distribution and exhibition as much as on investing in production.

In the meantime, Pathé continued to augment other parts of his company. A new studio was opened near Nice, in the south of France. Continsouza increased the output of apparatuses, with new models of the Pathé camera and projector, and Arthur Roussel developed a Pathé-Kok projector (using 28mm films) for schools, churches and homes. As the weekly production of film titles and positive filmstock continued to grow, Henri Fourel, head of the colouring department, and a machinist named Jean Méry mechanised and refined Pathé's trademark stencil-colour process. Laboratory space was allotted for an educational film division, where Dr Jean Comandon began research on microscopic cinematography. The earliest weekly newsreel, *Pathé-Journal*, was introduced, its half-hour episodes premiering at a Paris cinema bearing the same name. New film-makers joined the company: Spanish cameraman Segundo de Chomón, to make trick films and work on others such as the company's most widely sold film, the third version of its *Vie et Passion de N.S. Jésus Christ* (1907); Paris theatre director Georges Monca and playwright Camille de Morlhon, to direct adaptations from historical to contemporary dramas. Several Pathé actors became stars, with each developing a comic type for one of three very profitable comic series: André Deed in *Boireau*, Charles Prince in *Rigadin*, and Max Linder in *Max*. Provoked in part by Benoît-Lévy, Pathé began to promote films of higher quality, or *films d'art*, but now by helping set up satellite companies and then contracting to distribute their films. The first of these, Film d'Art, financed by businessman Paul Lafitte, involved directors, writers and actors from the prestigious Comédie Française in dramatic films such as *L'Assassinat du duc de Guise* (Charles le Bargy, André Calmettes, 1908). Another was SCAGL (Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens de Lettres), whose rights to adapt contemporary authors were brokered by the popular novelist Pierre Decourcelle. Given the use of a Pathé studio, Capellani agreed to head a production team that was soon releasing one hit after another, from *L'Arlésienne* (1908) to *L'Assommoir* (1909). So successful was this strategy that similar satellite companies were established in Italy, Russia, Germany, the USA and elsewhere in order for Pathé-Frères to have culturally specific films attractive on both the international market and different national markets.

Once again, Gaumont cautiously followed Pathé's lead. In the summer of 1908, long after others such as Gabriel Kaiser had begun constructing cinemas or converting existing venues, he opened his own Cinéma-Palace on the Paris boulevards. Slowly others were added there and in other cities, and by 1910 the circuit reached Bordeaux. Gaumont also continued to sell films, which improved his firm's position at the fairs; only setting up a satellite company to rent films in 1909. Two years after *Pathé-Journal* appeared, he introduced his own weekly newsreel, *Gaumont-Actualités*. Perhaps most important, Gaumont personally supervised the transition from a single film-maker, Guy (who accompanied her new husband, Herbert Blaché, when the latter sailed to the USA as the firm's representative), to a director-unit system of production, now headed by Feuillade. In this system, the company's chief comic actor, Romeo Bosetti, specialised in chase films and then developed several comic series that could compete with Pathé's. Another minor theatre actor, Léonce Perret, was hired to write and direct a variety of comedies and dramatic films. Taken on initially to assist Arnaud, caricaturist Émile Cohl soon was making a series of original animation films. Feuillade himself wrote and directed films that ranged across the spectrum, from realist dramas and biblical or historical films to the comic series *Bébé* (1910–12). By the time Gaumont agreed to rent films, he was making good on a promise to release at least half a dozen new films each week. That success sustained his commitment to the 'Chronophone' system, with the latest model demonstrated to professional societies in 1910.

The demand for films generated by Pathé, Gaumont and Méliès (who soon left film-making to resume staging *féerie* spectacles for his Paris theatre) now attracted other entrepreneurs, artists and educators to the industry. Pathé's former partner, Joly, founded a production company, Lux, hiring as writer-directors a former melodrama actor, Gérard Bourgeois, and a young caricaturist and journalist, Jean Durand. Even Théophile Pathé, a younger brother of Charles and Émile, set up a short-lived production company under his own name, hiring as his film-maker the former Lumière cameramen Promio. Much more successful were Paris lawyers Charles Jourjon and Marcel Vandal, who founded the production company of Éclair, erecting a glass house studio in Épinay-sur-Seine, renovating the Parnaland laboratories, and hiring Victorin Jasset, a popular director of spectacles at the Hippodrome and various cafés-concerts in Paris, to produce a regular schedule of fiction films. Their strategy was to make a series of films built around a single character and the formula first seized on was a detective series starring Pierre Bressol as Nick Carter, based loosely on popular American dime novels – and that series' success soon led to others. André Debrie, head of a precision tool factory in Paris, added a line of high-quality machines for perforating and printing

filmstock to his company's output and then designed a compact, lightweight camera marketed as the Debrie Parvo, which soon became standard for location shooting. Under the leadership of G.-M. Coissac, the Catholic publisher, La Bonne Presse, opened an office in Paris for selling projectors and selected programmes of films as 'teaching aids' and 'illuminated sermons'. Soon Coissac was running a co-operative exchange that rivalled those supplying the fairs and publishing the first French manual of film projectionists, all of which led Benoît-Lévy to organise similar efforts to incorporate films into French public education.

Consolidation and Proliferation: 1911–14

In the early 1910s, certain changes in the industry brought several familiar figures into greater prominence and allowed others to emerge and make their mark. Now that his far-flung company had reached what seemed the limits of its expansion, Pathé focused on strategies that could sustain its operations and profitability. He convinced his partners to invest in mass-producing negative and positive filmstock, in order to make the company a leading supplier of material as well as apparatuses in Europe. He also increasingly cut back on direct financial involvement in production and concentrated on distributing and exhibiting the output of a dozen satellite firms. When the company's position on the burgeoning American market began to slip by 1910, Pathé targeted central and eastern Europe for increased distribution. These moves gave greater autonomy to satellites such as SCAGL, where Capellani supervised Monca, René Leprince and others, and pushed Pathé film-maker De Morlhon to set up his own production company (Valetta), along with those involved in its popular comic series: Bosetti (Comica), Linder, Prince. They also spurred film-makers at rival companies to increase their output. These included Durand, Feuillade and Perret at Gaumont (which opened another studio near Nice), especially in comic series: *Calino* (Clément Migé), *Onésime* (Ernest Bourbon and 'Les Poucs'), *Bout-de-Zan* (René Poyen) and *Léonce* (Perret himself). And others: Jasset (joined by Émile Chautard and Maurice Tourneur) at Éclair; Henri Pouctal at Film d'Art, reorganised by Charles Delac (Ben Kaled, originally from Algeria) with Louis Nalpas (from Anatolia) as head of production; and Louis Mercanton and Joë Hammon (who created a cowboy character, Arizona Bill) at Éclipse, which had grown slowly since 1906 and finally capitalised on Mercanton's direction of Sarah Bernhardt in *Élizabeth, reine d'Angleterre* (1912). Moreover, directors such as Charles Burguet and stars such as Suzanne Grandais at Gaumont set up small companies for making films. In short, Pathé's decision to decentralise film production set in motion the proliferation of a 'cottage industry' of established and new production companies, largely in and around Paris, which has characterised French cinema ever since.

Distribution was much more concentrated, but here too there was plenty of space left by Pathé and Gaumont for new entrepreneurs. Out of the ashes of Cinéma-Halls, a company that had tried and failed to run a circuit of cinemas in Paris, Maurice Astaix and François Lallement (former Méliès employees), along with Paul Kastor (co-owner of several Paris cinemas), founded AGC (Agence Générale Cinématographique), which first acquired exclusive rental rights to the output of Film d'Art and Éclipse and then shared rights to Éclair films with a smaller company. It also gained rights to distribute a range of Italian, American and British films in France. The son of an engineering contractor in the Vendée, Louis Aubert bought out a small firm in Paris that sold and rented films and turned it into the fourth largest rental company by acquiring exclusive rights to distribute the Danish films of Nordisk and the Italian films of Cines, most notably *Quo Vadis?* (1913). Less concentrated was the exhibition sector, where a boom in cinema construction coincided with the emergence of luxury cinemas or 'palaces'. One of the first of these opened in November 1911, the 5,000-seat Gaumont-Palace (the former Hippodrome, which Cinéma-Halls had earlier tried to run as a cinema), managed by Edgar Costil as the new flagship of Gaumont's circuit. In partnership with Benoît-Lévy, Sandberg and others, Pathé erected the greatest number of luxury cinemas throughout Paris, from the Pathé-Palace to the 2,200-seat Tivoli-Cinéma. But the boom quickly attracted others. Léon Brézillon (who would found and head the French Trade Association of Film Theatre Owners in 1912) turned the Palais de Fêtes music hall into a 2,200-seat cinema, and former actor Jacques Castillan ran the Colisée, the first cinema built on the Champs-Élysées, which, though much smaller, successfully catered to Parisian high society. For his part, Aubert extended his business by building up a small chain of neighbourhood cinemas in Paris.

One of the more significant changes marking French cinema in the early 1910s was the development of multi-reel and then feature-length films. For the most part, well-established film-makers led this transformation, which affected all sectors of the industry. Through SCAGL, Capellani became the most crucial figure, especially in his adaptations of famous nineteenth-century stage plays and novels: e.g. *Le Courrier de Lyon* (1911), *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1911), *Les Mystères de Paris* (1912) and *Les Misérables* (1912), which ran 3,500 metres or twelve reels. At Film d'Art, Delac and Nalpas made multi-reel films the company's exclusive province, with André Calmettes directing Gabrielle Réjane in *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1911) and Pouctal directing Bernhardt in *La Dame aux camélias* (1912)

and then competing with Capellani in such big historical productions as the 4,000-metre *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1913). At Éclair, Jasset exploited popular crime novels for a series of sensational melodramas, notably in those starring Alexandre Arquillière: *Zigomar* (1911), *Zigomar contre Nick Carter* (1912) and *Zigomar, peau d'anguille* (1913). At Gaumont, Perret and Feuillade mined this genre as well, especially in Perret's three *Main de fer* films (1912–13) and Feuillade's five *Fantômas* films (1913–14). Other filmmakers explored the multi-reel format in contemporary bourgeois melodramas, as in Monca's *Le Petit Chose* (1912), for SCAGL, and De Morlhon's *La Broyeuse des coeurs* (1913), for Valetta. Feuillade and Perret did likewise for Gaumont: the former in *La Tare* (1911), an early title in the *Scènes de la vie telle qu'elle est* series that featured on the Gaumont-Palace's inaugural programme; the latter with eight-reel productions, *L'Enfant de Paris* (1913) and *Le Roman d'un mousse* (1914), both of which premiered in two hour-long parts, with an interval, much like a theatre performance.

Finally, the cinema gained enough influence during this period to justify an independent (more or less) trade press and to attract the attention of major newspapers. In 1908, Georges Dureau, who had already published a trade journal aimed at the fairground exhibitors, began to edit the bi-weekly *Ciné-Journal*, the principal specialised journal devoted to the industry; at first Dureau ignored Pathé-Frères and, reciprocally, the company did not place ads in his journal. By 1911, Dureau had rivals such as Charles Le Fraper, who edited *Le Courrier cinématographique*, and then E.L. Fouquet, who edited *Le Cinéma*, which merged with Georges Lordier's *L'Écho du cinéma* (when Lordier, who owned several small Paris cinemas, founded his own production company, Les Grands Films Populaires, taking over the bankrupt Lux's studio and granting Aubert distribution rights) to become the only bi-weekly aimed mainly at exhibitors and even spectators. By 1913, the four largest Paris dailies were printing weekly columns – or pages, in the case of *Le Journal* – devoted to moving pictures, while *Comoedia*, uniquely specialising in the arts, had a daily column, which included synoptic reviews. Even the noted literary historian and drama critic, René Doumic, felt compelled to write a partially admiring essay in the prestigious journal he edited, *La Revue des deux mondes*.

Disruption and Recovery: 1914–18

The outbreak of war in August 1914 crippled the French cinema industry and provoked a number of unanticipated changes. Exhibition venues were closed for several months; exports were cut off to central and eastern Europe; production was halted and only gradually resumed in early 1915. After losing its offices and laboratories in the USA to a fire in the spring of 1914, Éclair sold its studio facilities once the war erupted – and was never again a major producer in France. Key personnel such as Capellani, Perret and Linder were enticed away from Pathé-Frères and Gaumont to the USA, joining Louis Gasnier (head of Pathé's growing American output), Tourneur, Chautard and others from Éclair's American affiliate already well established in the American industry. Gaumont and Pathé made diametrically opposed decisions in meeting the challenges of the war. Gaumont quickly resumed production, relying first on Feuillade's talent and efficiency to gather together a team in southern France and then hiring a number of new writer-directors such as Brussels-born Jacques Feyder and Raymond Bernard, the son of a popular playwright. At Film d'Art, where he had taken over from Delac (mobilised for the war), Nalpas did likewise, adding Abel Gance as a new writer-director. Although Pathé continued to support SCAGL (where the famous theatre director, André Antoine, joined Monca, Leprince and others), Valetta and other satellites by distributing their films, he turned primarily to his American affiliate, now reorganised as Pathé-Exchange, to shore up his company's fortunes. In short, he gambled on making Pathé-Exchange films the core of Pathé-Frères' weekly programme of releases, in France and elsewhere. The gamble paid off largely through the success of the serials starring Pearl White, Ruth Roland and others, the first of which was released in late 1915 and given the 'Frenchified' title, *Les Mystères de New York*.

Given the demand for films and the general lack of French titles, wave after wave of American films, which had already inundated the French market before the war, now flooded the cinemas. Pathé was hardly alone in opening the flood gates. A Jewish émigré from Tunisia, Jacques Haïk, who had set up Western Import in early 1914, not only secured rental rights to the popular Keystone films but distributed those starring Charlie Chaplin in a series called *Charlot*. Later AGC would win the battle for the rights to Chaplin's Essanay and Mutual films. Charles Mary, a cinema owner and distributor of pre-war German films, took over the rights to Famous Players/Jesse Lasky features from Aubert, and one of his widely celebrated hits was Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915); Éclipse would later buy out his agency and distribute Triangle features, including the Westerns of William S. Hart. Even Gaumont finally succumbed to this obvious source of revenue in 1917 and negotiated a contract to distribute Paramount's features. The war period was hardly propitious for constructing new cinemas, but Aubert was prosperous enough to make an exception. In May 1915, now in partnership with Sandberg, he finally opened his long-planned Nouveautés-Aubert-Palace (its 1,500 seats making it the largest cinema on the Grands Boulevards),

the first of a circuit of Aubert-Palaces that would extend throughout Paris and other major cities.

Now that American films dominated their home market, the French faced this question: what exactly was 'French' about their 'national' cinema, a question first posed by publisher Henri Diamant-Berger in his new bi-weekly trade journal, *Le Film*, in 1916. One answer came from Feuillade who, with Gaumont's blessing, set out to compete with Pathé's American serials by abandoning crime thriller series such as *Les Vampires* (1915–16) and, with scenarios written by novelist Arthur Bernède, producing instead 'avenger' adventure serials that drew on nineteenth-century traditions of French story-telling and updated the figure of the chivalric hero. Backed by a trade press campaign strongly stressing its 'Frenchness' and complemented by Bernède's fictionalisation published in *Le Petit Parisien*, *Judex* (1917) was so popular that Feuillade quickly put another *Judex* serial into production. Another answer came in reinventing the bourgeois melodrama so as to avoid any reference to the war. The trick was to tell stories of threats, sexual and/or financial, to the French family, with the focus on misperceived female characters, perhaps acknowledging the ideological significance of women on the homefront. Such stories depended on the appeal of female stars and at least five came forward to ensure profitable series of films: Gabrielle Robinne, for SCAGL; Maryse Dauvray, for Valetta; Emmy Lynn, for Film d'Art; Mistinguett for André Hugon's Films Succès; and most popular of all, Suzanne Grandais, directed by Mercanton and René Hervil, for Éclipse. Tellingly, another female star, Musidora, who had played the chief villain in *Judex*, sought to produce her own films, but had to do so 'in exile' in Italy.

In *Le Film*, along with several newspapers, a sustained body of film theory and criticism now also began to emerge. Colette was the first writer of some importance to engage in film criticism, although she reviewed films irregularly for the new journal in 1916 and 1917, before leaving to write scenarios for her friend, Musidora. But her review of *The Cheat*, in August 1916, was groundbreaking. In June 1917, a young drama critic, Louis Delluc, became *Le Film*'s regular reviewer, and one year later he was writing a weekly column for *Paris-Midi*. Delluc used his columns to promote the work of French film-makers such as Antoine, Gance and Jacques de Baroncelli, a Paris journalist who had set up his own company in 1917, as well as that of selected American (Chaplin, Hart, Thomas Ince, D.W. Griffith) and Swedish film-makers (Victor Sjöström, Mauritz Stiller). He also supported several young writers such as Louis Aragon and Jean Cocteau who were discovering the cinema and whose ideas to some extent he shared. Perhaps his most lasting contribution, however, was to develop certain concepts such as *photogénie* in order to apprehend what he saw as 'the birth of an extraordinary art' (Delluc 1918). Delluc's principal rival during the war was Émile Vuillermoz, the most important French music critic of the day, who began writing a bi-weekly column of film criticism in the influential Paris daily, *Le Temps*, in November 1916. Although he too promoted some of the same film-makers as Delluc (together they expressed a prototypical auteur theory of cinema), Vuillermoz was more tied to a Symbolist aesthetic in his own efforts to theorise this new art form.

'Quality Cinema' and Its Diverse Proponents: After the Great War

By 1919, the French confronted conditions no better, and perhaps even worse, than they had two or three years before. Despite its best defensive efforts, as Diamant-Berger put it, 'France was in danger of becoming a colony of the American cinema' (Sadoul 1974: 45). As soon as the war ended, one after another the major American companies set up their own offices in Paris: first came Paramount and Fox-Film, then United Artists and First National, and finally Universal. Goldwyn and Metro signed exclusive contracts, respectively, with Gaumont and Aubert. How would the French respond?

Pathé provided one model by reorganising and refining the structural changes initiated before the war. As early as 1917, he had declared impractical any notion that the French could re-establish a production system comparable to that of the Americans – specifically rejecting a proposal from Sandberg and Nalpas to modernise French studio facilities and create a consortium of French film producers. Instead, he made the primary objective of Pathé-Cinéma (the company's new core) the production and marketing of negative and positive filmstock for France and the rest of Europe. Pathé cameras and projectors continued to set the standard for such apparatuses in Europe; in addition to the Pathé-Kok projector, widely used in schools throughout Europe and North America, Pathé had his laboratories develop a new camera and projector for amateurs, Pathé-Baby (using 9.5mm film). In short, the company would focus on exploiting technological advances in the hardware and material base that the cinema required. In 1920, a further reorganisation established a separate company, Pathé-Consortium, whose chief mission was to assume control over film distribution and exhibition. Significantly absent was any reference to production, confirming rumours that Pathé was abandoning not only satellites such as SCAGL but film production altogether.

Despite being dropped by Paramount, Gaumont used the profits from Feuillade's new avenger serials, *Tih Minh* (1919) and *Barrabas* (1920) to help several young film-makers develop their talent. The result, under the

guidance of Costil (now a producer), was 'Séries Pax', a remarkable series of medium-budget films written and directed by former theatre director Léon Poirier and poet Marcel L'Herbier, including the latter's *Rose-France* (1919) and *L'Homme du large* (1920). Some recently recruited film-makers, such as Gance and Feyder, secured independent financing to strike out on their own; others such as De Baroncelli worked first for Film d'Art (now managed by Delac, with Vandal as a new partner) and then again on his own or, in the case of former journalist Germaine Dulac, for Films André Legrand and then Film d'Art. With greater financial resources than Delac and Vandal (whose consortium plans came to nought), Aubert began to establish his own consortium, taking over the rental rights of AGC (including Film d'Art) and adding production facilities at a studio he had built outside Paris, for such film-makers as René Le Somptier and Hervil and Mercanton (from Éclipse, now defunct). Aubert's success was assured when a costly project he had risked distributing, Feyder's *L'Atlantide* (1921), made a huge profit, running for a full year at the Madeleine Cinema, a record broken only by *Ben-Hur* in 1927. The Madeleine was one of many luxury cinemas erected in the capital and other French cities after the war. Still active, Benoît-Lévy financed some of these, including the Madeleine and the Salle Marivaux; Linder, returning from the USA, put up the money for another, the Ciné-Max-Linder. Pathé, Gaumont and Aubert all expanded their circuits, with Aubert now leasing some of the largest and most prestigious cinemas, from the Tivoli-Cinéma to the Madeleine.

Much like Aubert, Sandberg was also committed to building a consortium that allied production with studio ownership and distribution, and part of his strategy was to produce distinctly French serials. The format that Feuillade had developed in *Judex* was taken up by new film companies, by Phocéa (in Marseilles) and most notably by the Société des Cinéromans, a crucial component of Sandberg's plan to rebuild the French film industry, with its home base at the Ciné-Studio, newly constructed at La Victorine outside Nice. Phocéa capitalised on the undimmed star status of Grandais in several serials, the last of which, *L'Essor* (1920), came out just weeks after her sudden death in a car accident. Financed by Sandberg, who also supported 'Films Louis Nalpas' projects, Cinéromans engaged Édouard-Émile Violet (a former Gaumont film-maker), René Navarre (the star of *Fantômas*), Bernède

Split-screen action from *Tih Minh* (Louis Feuillade, 1919)

(Feuillade's scriptwriter), and another *feuilleton* novelist, Gaston Leroux, to produce two serials a year, marketed in conjunction with their fictionalisation in several Paris dailies, especially *Le Matin*. Together with Gaumont, Cinéromans and Phocéa sought to standardise French film production and distribution. Financial resources would be concentrated in integrated multiple-film projects requiring a coherent production schedule, rather than being dispersed over half a dozen to a dozen separate films. In Sandberg's case, moreover, it was assumed that their distribution would be guaranteed through SIC (Société Industrielle Cinématographique) Éclair, another company he had formed out of the bankruptcy of Éclair.

Despite his declarations, Pathé himself could not refrain from giving selective support to film production. That could be direct, as in the case of independent projects such as Gance's four-part *J'accuse!* (1919). It also could be indirect (and violate the company's reorganisation), as in the distribution contract linking Pathé-Cinéma with a new company that Decourcelle founded, SEC (Société d'Éditions Cinématographiques, replacing SCAGL), which set out to make serials and 'superproductions' modelled on the initial success of Pouctal's four-part adaptation, *Travail* (1920). In sharp conflict with Pathé, but imitating his actions, Denis Richard, the new head at Pathé-Consortium, boldly plunged his company into film production as well. Most notably, he arranged to finance Diamant-Berger's serial adaptation of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1921). Not only did the film's budget reach a grand total of 2.5 million francs (unheard of at the time), but a large sum was allotted to promote its press previews and then its premiere. Yet this massive serial (each of its twelve parts was feature-length) achieved an astonishing success: over the course of three months, it set a record by playing in more than 1,000 cinemas, nearly half of all those operating in France, and by grossing at least six times its cost. Although these serials undoubtedly helped to revive the French industry, their success was compromised by the internal struggles within the Pathé companies, a financial crisis in 1921 (which adversely affected Sandberg) and mounting criticism in the press which discredited many of them as 'bad cinema', an unhealthy indulgence, even a form of drug addiction.

The serial thus became the focus of a crisis of French 'quality'. Could a standardised commodity like the serial ever be a quality product? And how could it be representative of a 'healthy' national cinema? One answer would soon come when the managing director of *Le Matin*, Jean Sapène, a self-made man much like Pathé and Gaumont, took control of Cinéromans, merging the industries of the cinema and the press. At the same time, however, a quite different conception of quality cinema emerged, defined largely in aesthetic terms and located outside the commercial industry. The source? The ciné-club movement that quickly rose and flourished in Paris, engaging many writers, artists, film-makers and intellectuals, among them Delluc, Dulac, Ricciotto Canudo and Léon Moussinac.

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2 Business 1890–1920

The Birth of the Industry

Laurent Le Forestier

Among the countless technological innovations of the nineteenth century, there are few that gave rise to a whole industry. And while cinema is obviously an industry, the speed of its industrialisation, from the very beginning and more specifically in France, also sets it apart. Indeed, if the French paternity in technically perfecting the cinematographic system may be contested, the film industry was definitely born in France. One may even suggest that the celebration of the Lumière brothers as the inventors of cinema in their home country may in fact be explained by the multiple industrial developments that their invention made possible: manufacture of equipment and filmstock, film production, development of markets for the circulation and exhibition of films. In a sense, this would make them the inventors of the film industry, all the more since their real contribution to research into moving photographic images was to shift the emphasis from scientific experimentation to industrial application.

With most of the decisive 'pre-cinematographic' research issuing from scientists in France (Pierre-Jules-César Janssen, Étienne-Jules Marey, Georges Demenÿ, to name a few), the Lumières' interest in the question is symptomatic of the attention that industrialists paid to this novelty around 1895. In a way, cinema was born in France from the moment it began to represent a form of diversification for commercial activities already established at the time, whether photography (the Lumières, Léon Gaumont), or the distribution of phonographic (and then cinematographic) recordings and related machines (Charles Pathé), or the production of spectacles (Georges Méliès). In short, whereas scientists expected 'intellectual' benefits from the cinematograph (the representation of what the eye could not see), the business owners and industrialists who later entered the fray mostly contemplated financial returns (the diffusion of what no eye had ever seen). Schematically, these three pre-existing fields of activity may be considered forerunners of the three forms of industrialisation French cinema adopted in the so-called silent period.

The Manufacture of Equipment and Supplies

This first form of industrialisation of French cinema mainly originated in photographic activity. All the parties involved found a way to exploit this invention as an extension of their business, from large structures (the Lumière company, with its Lyons factory, then considered the largest of its type in Europe, specialising in the production of photographic materials and particularly the famous gelatine silver bromide plates) to small stores (the Comptoir Général de Photographie, whose owner turned it into Léon Gaumont et Compagnie over the summer of 1895 and started selling optical equipment). The Lumière company, for instance, started commercialising their Cinématographe almost as if it were a photographic service, offering people an image of themselves: after filming was completed in a given location, passers-by were informed that they would be able to see themselves at a film projection later the same evening. Very soon, however, the system became internationalised with franchised cameramen travelling all over the world, projecting films everywhere they went and bringing new films back to France. The Lumières thus changed activities, in a way, since they started taking in profits thanks to the organisation of a new spectacle, the projection of short film scenes known as 'animated views'. This new practice created multiple problems for them (notably that of remaining competitive), and in 1897 they reintegrated the Cinématographe into their core business, i.e. photographic equipment. From then on, the company essentially manufactured the film apparatus, which had been franchised rather than sold up to that point, and filmstock, which gradually became its main concern in cinema (as shown in the various patents registered by the firm in relation to related innovations – colour, format, stereoscopy, for example). Besides film production, these two forms of industrialisation were to structure the film business in France over the following years.

Gaumont, who also had a photography background, started selling equipment and general supplies: as with photography, the potential target was professional as well as non-professional customers. Pathé-Frères joined the competition in the same sectors of the market in 1896, having previously commercialised Edison phonographs and Kinetoscopes. Still, selling equipment and supplies to professionals assumes the existence of a market for the distribution of films, and therefore presupposes films. It was quite evidently to drive the sale of equipment that Gaumont and Pathé started to produce short film scenes, the profits from which quickly overtook those derived from the sale of machines. Until the 1950s–60s, both companies maintained their original focus, without which the film industry would not have existed in France. Indeed, to develop the production and sale of equipment, phonographic as well as cinematographic, Pathé-Frères received the backing of Jean Neyret and Claude Grivolas' industrial and financial group, whose important capital investment made possible the transformation of the small company into the Compagnie Générale de Cinématographes, Phonographes et Pellicules in 1898.

Over the following years, Pathé and Gaumont, the two main players in the French (and world) market, thus remained involved in this field of business at the same time as they implemented a strategy of diversification. The Société des Établissements Gaumont continued to sell accessories and general supplies for photography as well as film equipment. Similarly, Pathé maintained its phonographic division; it became the Compagnie Générale de Phonographes, Cinématographes et Appareils de Précision in 1900 after absorbing the Manufacture Française d'Appareils de Précision, directed by Pierre-Victor Continsouza. Contemporary advertising shows an emphasis on the commercialisation of equipment: the number of machines manufactured, flaunted in the promotional inserts of the trade press, demonstrated the power of a company (Pathé, for instance, prided itself on manufacturing 500 machines a month in 1909), or associated it with an image of innovation and therefore technical excellence (in 1909, Gaumont still presented its Chronophone as 'the only apparatus realising absolute synchronism between the cinematograph and the phonograph'). The importance given to the manufacturing of equipment reveals that, even as films became the first source of profits, there was no question of abandoning the less lucrative production of cinematographic supplies. In these early years, equipment evolved very quickly and manufacturing it ensured the best technical conditions to direct, print and distribute short film scenes.

In that area, the French industry was so far ahead of foreign competitors that its machines swamped the international market; between 1905 and 1930, 50,000 units of the Pathé-Renforcé projector were sold, while the company's professional camera was even used in the USA by Cecil B. DeMille, Maurice Tourneur, D.W. Griffith and Henry King, among others. This technical advance had its drawbacks, however – or, to put it differently, the cost of professional machines largely limited their already hypothetical accessibility to non-professional film-makers. This may also have been the outcome of a deliberate strategy; indeed, manufacturing equipment for professional use generally proved very lucrative, with high profit margins. Just before World War I, the market for equipment tended therefore to be divided between professional and non-professional, notably with the manufacturing of certain devices specifically designed for non-professionals. In 1912 Pathé launched its Pathé-Kok camera (28mm) at about half the price of the professional camera, along with the whole gamut of related machines (projectors, etc.). This also made possible the development of a market for the private distribution of films. In any case, this initial form of industrialisation of French cinema, which should probably be related to the strength of the French market for photography in the nineteenth century, was decisive in that it gave rise to an area in which the French industry was to excel long term (e.g. Debrie, and later Beauviala).

By contrast, French companies did not perform as well when it came to the production of filmstock, despite the early specialisation of the Lumière company in that area. In 1906, this was the most lucrative of the company's pursuits, probably because Lumière was then the only French alternative to Eastman, the powerful American company. Pathé, however, bought only a small proportion of its filmstock from Lumière, complaining about the poor quality of the product. Favouring the American competitor, it soon began manufacturing its own stock, notably purchasing Blair, an English company. There again, results did not prove quite satisfactory and these few failures probably account for the fact that, from the start, the French industry missed the chance to dominate the production of filmstock. One exception is that the manufacture of positive filmstock gradually became a significant business for Pathé, with the signature of an agreement with Kodak in 1927 to produce unexposed film in Vincennes.

Early Years of Film Production

In the early days of the film business, a single person was generally responsible for the making of films (the Lumière cameramen or an artist like Méliès), intervening at all levels of film creation (script, preparatory sketches, set design, acting, shooting, assembling the films, distribution …). This artisanal period of production

Méliès' glasshouse studio in Montreuil, 1897

lasted until the first years of the twentieth century, when films were not yet in mass circulation – in other words, for as long as the French film industry had not fully assessed which sector, equipment or films, would bring in the highest profit. At Pathé, the phonograph represented the most lucrative aspect of its turnover until 1906. However, the revenue generated by its film business had doubled between 1903 and 1904; doubled again over each of the two following years before tripling between 1906 and 1907. This strong growth, which took off in 1904, was clearly correlated to the shift toward the mass-scale production of animated views. Indeed, that same year Pathé opened a second film studio ('théâtre de poses') in Montreuil, prior to renovating the Vincennes site and hiring new directors (Georges Hatot, Charles-Lucien Lépine, Louis Gasnier, Albert Capellani and others). With this new strategy, Pathé ushered in an era of industrialisation for French cinema, as far as the making of films was concerned. Henceforth films were to be conceived as series in terms of their production and their distribution. Thus, in order to meet the tastes of different publics, scenes were categorised in series that anticipated later film genres. The first Pathé series involved 'outdoor scenes, general views and genre scenes', the second 'comic scenes', the third 'trick scenes and transformation scenes', the fourth 'sport scenes/acrobatics', the fifth series included 'current historical, political and military scenes', the sixth 'saucy, spicy scenes', the seventh 'dance and ballet scenes', the eighth 'dramatic and realistic scenes', the ninth 'magical and fairy-tale scenes', the tenth 'religious and biblical scenes', the eleventh 'cine-phonographic scenes', and the twelfth 'scenes about art and industry' (which until 1907 were referred to as 'various scenes'). This serial logic also applied to the conception of films, for example with the recycling of sets, narrative variations on specific figures (e.g. the chase) or similar themes (e.g. mocking black people), or the repetition of similar alternating 'tableau' shots (the most famous example being *Je vais chercher du pain* by Pathé in 1906).

At that time films were sold by the metre, like fabric, and exhibitors could 'cut' at will the film that they had purchased. Quite evidently, the point of this process of industrialisation was to maximise profits while keeping costs down. Two modes of production were developed to that effect and co-existed in most film production

Filming on an open-air Pathé set in the 1910s

companies. The first meant that production was externalised, delegated to a third party who did not belong to the company and who was paid by the metre. This third party was responsible for finding or designing the script and directing it, and sometimes benefited from the provision of materials (filmstock) or logistical support (cameraman, set designer, etc.) from the production company. The system of subsidiary production companies set up by Pathé from 1908 (SCAGL, Comica, etc.) represented a refinement of this mode of production, but the out-sourcing of production continued beyond these subsidiaries (as in the case of Pathé's relationship with Film d'Art). The second mode was handled 'in-house' and managed by a kind of supervisor or head director (Ferdinand Zecca for Pathé, Louis Feuillade for Gaumont), who was effectively a 'producer', even though the term did not yet exist. This person would select scripts from those sent in by outside authors, who got paid per text, then dispatch them to the other directors on the team. These directors would then organise the filming with the set designers, grips and cameramen salaried by the company, hire the actors and choose the costumes before making decisions about the *mise en scène*, in the theatrical sense of the word.

Whichever mode of production was chosen, everything was designed to make films at the lowest possible cost. Filming in natural outdoor locations was limited to the bare minimum because of the additional expenses involved (transportation, accommodation, actors paid by the day) and because controlling the set (the role of the supervisor) became impossible in these conditions. When it proved necessary, the trips away from the studio were managed as efficiently as possible, by shooting several films on the same site for instance (outdoor, or 'plein air' shots, were systematically used to bring out the characteristics of the chosen area). All this accounts for the importance given to the cost price of films per metre at the time. Even the trade press debated the issue, pointing out that the average cost of a cinematographic scene was around 15 francs per metre. The few exceptions to the rule of lowering costs always had an industrial dimension. An example is the systematisation of shooting with two cameras, which, although it meant doubling the

salary costs for the cameramen, increased the chances that any footage shot would be usable: indeed, to avoid the risk of a negative proving unusable due to a problem while recording, a cameraman would shoot more slowly or adjust the aperture slightly less than his colleague. This rationalisation in the organisation of shooting gradually became established after 1904 and went hand in hand with the shift to mass production, itself a response to the progressive expansion of the world market for films.

From 1905, cinema – as it was conceived in France, mainly by Pathé and Gaumont – became a very profitable industry, particularly the export side where both companies made most of their profits. Logically enough, starting in 1906, new companies joined the fray: the Société Générale de Cinématographes Éclipse (September 1906), the Société des Phonographes et Cinématographes Lux (November 1906), the Compagnie des Cinématographes Théophile Pathé (February 1907), the Société Française des Films Éclair (June 1907), the Société Générale des Cinématographes Radios (August 1907), Film d'Art (February 1908), the Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens de Lettres (SCAGL, June 1908), the Compagnie des Cinématographes Le Lion (September 1908), all started producing cinematographic scenes. The influx of newcomers on the market (not only in France but worldwide) almost immediately caused a crisis of overproduction in France, a situation for which Pathé bore some responsibility. Besides distributing the productions of Film d'Art and financing those of SCAGL, the firm chose to flood the market by further increasing its own production. The crisis lasted slightly over two years: in the year 1908–9, Pathé's profits were down even though its turnover had increased, compared to the previous year. This led to the emergence of a two-tiered production system: on the one hand, prestigious 'artistic' films (essentially dramas and comedies), ever longer and requiring significant investment; on the other hand, shorter films (comic films, actualities, scientific films, etc.), which could be produced much more cheaply. Most French companies then created labels or subsidiaries corresponding to these two categories. Pathé, for instance, became a holding company and took care to externalise major financial risks by entrusting most of its production to small companies specialising in specific types of films (Comica, among others).

This transformation of production was also influenced by the increased entry of foreign films into the French market from 1908 onwards. These films were different in length, formal quality and artistic ambitions, and they forced the French industry to adapt or at least react to the new situation. The additional competition curbed the upward progression of turnover, leading French companies to look for new solutions to maintain their net profit. In the early 1910s, some started importing foreign cinematographic scenes, buying films whose cost had already been recouped in other markets (notably the USA) and which thus required a lower investment. It is generally considered that, as early as 1912, French films were no longer numerically dominant in their own territory. The war evidently accentuated the phenomenon, rendering it irreversible. French production slowed down considerably, as many commercial outlets were lost (at home and abroad). At the end of the war, French cinema slowly resumed business, but at that point it represented perhaps no more than 10 to 20 per cent of all the films projected in France.

After the war, Pathé was split into several entities, each with its own specialisation – phonographic and cinematographic, in the first place. Charles Pathé remained at the helm of Pathé-Cinéma, which produced filmstock and was involved in non-professional cinema (it launched the Pathé-Baby in 1922). Pathé-Consortium, founded in 1920, maintained a limited activity in production, essentially small-budget and medium-budget films, which was to decline until the late 1920s; it also controlled distribution and exhibition. Yet this distribution concerned mainly films produced by others, so that the creation of small independent companies (Les Films Abel Gance, Delia, Les Films Molière, Cinégraphic, etc.) was encouraged. Gaumont pursued a roughly similar strategy, with a priority given to theatrical exhibition. Still, true to his reputation, Léon Gaumont remained passionate about technical innovations and was deeply involved in research on sound cinema. In the early 1920s, his company was still more or less committed to production, even launching the careers of some young film-makers such as Marcel L'Herbier, René Clair, Jacques Feyder, while still placing its trust in the experienced Louis Feuillade. However, repeated commercial failures brought this persistence to an end, and Feuillade's death in 1925 marked the end of production at Gaumont. The company then struck an alliance with Metro Goldwyn Mayer, contenting itself with the distribution of the American major's productions in its large network of theatres. There logically followed an erosion of French production as a whole, falling from 120 films in 1921 to sixty-nine in 1929. That it even stayed at this level mostly has to do with the new companies that appeared in the 1920s, such as the Société des Cinéromans. The result of the association of three newspapers, *Le Matin* (whose director Jean Sapène was behind the initiative), *Le Journal* and *L'Écho de Paris*, the company's goal was to produce films whose scenarios were then published in serial form in these newspapers. The Société des Cinéromans was so successful in the early 1920s that it ended up sealing an association with Pathé, with Sapène